

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 04342 161856Z

62

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 4342

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PN

SUBJECT: PRIVATE DETECTIVE CHARGED WITH WORKING FOR CIA

SUMMARY: BEGINNING AS AN EXPOSE OF THE HOME-BUSTING ACTIVITIES OF PANAMANIAN PRIVATE DETECTIVES, A SERIES OF ARTICLES IN THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED PAPER CRITICA HAS NOW DEVELOPED INTO GOP CHARGES OF CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY AND AT LEAST ONE PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR AND THE CLAIM OF ANOTHER THAT THE CIA HAD TWICE ATTEMPTED TO EMPLOY HIM. WHILE NEITHER ALLEGATION IS CORRECT, IT IS CLEAR THAT, FOR ITS OWN REASONS, THE GOP HAS BEEN PROVIDING CRITICA WITH ITS MATERIAL. END SUMMARY.

1. THE AUGUST 15 EDITION OF THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED DAILY CRITICA ACCORDED BANNER COVERAGE TO EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH GASPAR BILO MENDEZ, ASSISTANT TO MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE, IN WHICH HE STATES THAT ONE RAMON MEJDOUB, A LOCAL PRIVATE DETECTIVE, HAD BEEN FOUND TO BE WORKING FOR THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY. ACCORDING TO BILO MENDEZ, AN INVESTIGATION HAD ESTABLISHED THAT MEJDOUB HAD BEEN IN DAILY CONTACT WITH "HIGH OFFICIALS OF NORTH AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE IN THE CANAL ZONE," ON WHOSE BEHALF HE SUBORNED OFFICIALS IN KEY MINISTRIES AND THE UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA. AS A RESULT
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PAGE 02 PANAMA 04342 161856Z

OF THESE CONTACTS, HE ALLEGES, "SENSITIVE INFORMATION

PREJUDICIAL TO THE INTERESTS OF PANAMA" WAS CHanneled TO
"THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES OF THE UNITED STATES."

2. BILO MENDEZ ALSO QUOTED AS SAYING THAT MEJDOUB HAD
HAD DIRECT CONTACTS WITH E. HOWARD HUNT WHILE THE LATTER
WORKED IN WHITE HOUSE AND THAT "THE GOVERNMENT OF
PANAMA RECEIVED INFORMATION EARLY IN 1972 THAT A
CERTAIN FACTION IN THE WHITE HOUSE INTENDED TO ELIMINATE
GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS HERRERA." IN THIS CONNECTION,
BILO MENDEZ STATED THAT AS "FORTUNATELY THERE ARE DECENT
PERSONS...WHO DO NOT SHARE THE AUTOCRATIC POSITION OF
THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, MUCH LESS THE ACTIVITIES
OF CERTAIN OFFICIALS OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT,"
PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS HAD BEEN ALERTED TO THE THREAT
AGAINST TORRIJOS BY "PERSONS IN THE FBI AND OTHER
INVESTIGATIVE AGENCIES, SUCH AS THAT OF THE SENATE..."

3. THE BILO MENDEZ INTERVIEW IN CRITICA WAS FOLLOWED
ON AUGUST 16 WITH AN ARTICLE REPORTING A STATEMENT BY
GERARDO ALVARADO, ANOTHER PRIVATE DETECTIVE, IN WHICH
HE CLAIMED THAT ON TWO OCCASIONS, IN 1964 AND 1972, THE
CIA "HAD ATTEMPTED TO UTILIZE MY SERVICES." BOTH
CRITICA ARTICLES ARE PART OF THE PAPER'S SERIES ON THE
ACTIVITIES OF LOCAL PRIVATE DETECTIVES. ALTHOUGH IT
STARTED ON AUGUST 6 WITH A REPORT OF COMPLAINTS THAT
INVESTIGATORS HIRED BY WIVES TO GET THE GOODS ON THEIR
WAYWARD HUSBANDS WERE ENDANGERING THE PANAMANIAN FAMILY,
THE TENOR OF CRITICA'S REPORTING SOON SHIFTED. ON
AUGUST 10, VICE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE,
CESAR RODRIGUEZ, ADDRESSING THE QUESTIONS, STARTED THAT
SOME PRIVATE DETECTIVES "HAVE RELATIONS WITH
INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES SUCH AS THE CIA AND FBI" AND
ASSERTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CRACKING DOWN ON
THESE ACTIVITIES. THIS WAS QUICKLY FOLLOWED BY AN
INTERVIEW WITH DARIO AROSEMENA, DIRECTOR OF DENI, IN
WHICH HE STATED THAT DOCUMENTS FOUND AT ONE DETECTIVE'S
OFFICE "PROVED THE CONNECTION OF THOSE GENTELMEN WITH
INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE AGENCIES." AROSEMENA ALSO
REMARKED THAT DETECTIVES BOSTED OPENLY TO CLIENTS OF
THEIR CONTACTS WITH "THE FBI AND CIA OF THE UNITED STATES,
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PAGE 03 PANAMA 04342 161856Z

THE SCOTLAND YARD OF ENGLAND, THE RUSSIAN KGB, ETC."

4. COMMENT: WHILE IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW FAR THE
MATTER WILL GO, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GOP HAS BEEN
SUPPLYING CRITICA WITH MATERIAL IT NEEDS TO
KEEP STORY ON FRONT PAGE. WHAT IS NOT YET CLEAR IS
WHY. ONE POSSIBLE REASON IS THAT THE GOP, WHICH IS
WELL AWARE THAT FOR SUCH A SMALL COUNTRY PANAMA HAS A

RATHER LARGE FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY TO CONTEND WITH, HAS CHOSEN FOR CONTER-INTELLIGENCE PURPOSES TO SHAKE-UP ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL SOURCES AS IT HAS PERIODICALLY DONE IN THE PAST. ANOTHER EXPLANATION, PERHAPS EQUALLY PLAUSIBLE, IS THAT ARTICLES ARE INSPIRED BY FACT THAT TORRIJOS AND OTHERS IN GOVERNMENT HAVE A VERY REAL HUNG-UP ABOUT THE GENERAL'S PERSONAL SECURITY AND THE CIA. WHATEVER THE REASONS. THERE IS NO BASIS IN FACT FOR GOP'S ALLEGATIONS THAT THE CIA HAD SUBORNED MEJDOUB OR APPROACHED ALVARADO. SAYRE

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